

TWO
CONFERENCES
ON 3
BAPTISM,
BETWEEN
A

Quærist and an Apologist.

K

Search the Scriptures.

JOHN V. 39.

*Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing ;
but the keeping of the Commandments of God.*

I COR. VII. 19.

CONCORD:

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M,DCC,XCIV.

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Conferences on Baptism.

CONFERENCE I.

Querist. **M**R. *Apologist*, how do you do? I rejoice to find you at home.—I hope you are in health and at leisure: for I have come to see you, for the purpose of conferring with you upon some subjects which, at present, exercise my mind.

Apologist. I thank you, Sir, I am in health and at your service: and shall, with pleasure, converse on any subject you desire, hoping it may be for our mutual edification.

Q My mind, of late, Sir, has been attentive to religious subjects, and I think it is time for me to fix my sentiments, and adopt some regular mode of religious practice. But when I reflect on the different principles which are embraced by religious professors, I am embarrassed, and can hardly satisfy myself, which is most agreeable to scripture.

A. No doubt, Sir, religious subjects are too much neglected by us all. And it is particularly to be lamented, that the professors of religion, who should be *of the same mind and judgment*, are so divided in their sentiments, as to perplex and discourage those who wish not to *halt between two opinions*; but to be established in the doctrines and practice of the gospel. But what are the points which exercise your mind?

Q My mind, Sir, is not so much exercised about the principal doctrines of faith, as about the administration of divine ordinances; and especially the *subjects of baptism*. Indeed, Sir, I was brought up in the belief, that none but *believers* should be baptised; but lately, so much has been said in favour of infant baptism, that I begin to think it may be scriptural;
yet

yet having many objections and doubts about it, I determined to pay you a visit, and, with your leave, propose them, wishing to hear what you may say in answer to them, and by what arguments you vindicate it, that I may be better able to determine which is right, and conduct accordingly.

A. It is prudent for us to be very deliberate in fixing our opinions, and a candid, impartial consideration of the objections against any principle, and the arguments in favour of it, will be a happy mean of enabling us to embrace our principles understandingly and judiciously, and prevent our being *carried away with every wind of doctrine*—Though probably, you much mistake in applying to *me*, on this occasion; yet since you have done it, if you please to propose your difficulties, I will offer my thoughts, hoping they may afford you relief.

Q. If the baptism of infants was to obtain in the christian church, it is strange to me, that nothing is said about it in the New Testament, where directions are given for the administration of sacred ordinances. I should have thought, that then all such subjects would have been so clearly stated, that there could have been no doubts or disputes, about points of such importance, in the christian church; but since there are no intimations concerning the baptism of children, in the directions which Christ gave the apostles, I cannot but question the warrantableness of that practice.

A. This objection, Sir, is easily removed, if we allow, that the seal of God's covenant, at that time, was affixed to children; but neither you, nor any other person, will question this. No subject is more clearly expressed in scripture, than that circumcision, which was the seal of the covenant, between God and his people, was administered to children, from

from the time that God erected his church in Abraham, till the ascension of Christ. — As this was the original appointment of God, and the constant practice of his people, it was wholly unnecessary for Christ to say any thing about it to his disciples, *unless he designed to alter it*, being already fully established and universally known :* So that I think, the silence of Christ about this subject, equal to a declaration, that he designed to make no alteration in this practice. This opinion is confirmed by his conduct in other instances, where he changed the institutions of his worship. He appointed his supper in the place of the passover—and baptism, to be the initiating seal in his kingdom; and if he designed to exclude the children of believing parents, who had been united in covenant with them, might we not have expected, that he would have given some intimation of it to his disciples? But as he gave no directions about them, may we not consider his silence as a tacit declaration, implying, that their state was already adjusted, subject to no alteration?

Q. But, Sir, it seems to me, that the directions he gave the apostles, are so confined, as to make it unnecessary to say any thing about them.—The exclusion of infants, in general, from baptism, is implied in the rules he prescribed for their conduct. He authorized them to preach the gospel to every creature, commanding them to baptize those who believed, and this was as much as to forbid their baptizing any who believed not. If infants appear-

* When civil constitutions are established by public authority, the articles, or terms, are always binding, till they are publicly altered, or repealed. — If this maxim is as true in divine constitutions, as it is in human, if we produce a divine precept for the administration of the seal of God's covenant to children, it will vindicate the practice of it, till decisive evidence is produced, that this precept is annulled. As therefore we have indisputable evidence, that infants were once united with their parents, in their relation to God, it belongs to those who now exclude them, to prove that this precept has been repealed.

ed to believe, they were to baptize them : if not, to withhold baptism from them : so that there was no need of saying any thing about them in particular.

A. Perhaps we shall most easily perceive how they would understand these points, by putting ourselves in their place. Let us for once suppose, that we are James and John—have been taught to look to Abraham, as the common father of our nation—had the covenant and promise made to him, explained to us—been taught, that God required all parents, on the severest penalty, to circumcise their children *a*—have seen this universally practised—and have circumcised our own. Let us further suppose, that Christ is now on earth—that we are among his disciples—have accompanied him in all his journeys—seen him much displeased with us for rebuking parents, who brought their children for his blessing—and heard him say, *Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not : for of such is the kingdom of Heaven* *b*. Let us now receive his direction to preach and baptize ; and when we observe, that he says nothing about children, shall we not conclude, that he still connects them with their parents, as he always had done ? and that what he says about believing and being baptized, respects those other persons, who may unite with us, in acknowledging him to be the true Messiah, as a revival of the old law, which, in this respect, was yet to be in force, so that *there should be one law and one manner, to the home born, and to the stranger*. *c*—And are not these conjectures strongly supported by their immediate practice ? Had they understood the direction of Christ, to have destroyed all connection between parents, and their children, might we not have expected, that they would have avoided all expressions that had a tendency

a Gen. XVII. 14. *b* Mark X. 13, 14. *c* Exod. XII. 49. Num. XV. 16.

tendency to preserve the ancient idea, of *parents*, and *their seed*—but is there any appearance of this?—Do they not expressly improve the ancient covenant and promise, as a motive to induce their hearers to a compliance with the gospel—*The promise is to you, and your children.---Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. a* And would not their hearers consider this, as giving apostolic sanction to the covenant with Abraham, under the gospel dispensation?*

And whether there be not as much evidence, that the apostles practised, as that they refused, infant baptism, may be the subject of a future enquiry.

2. Sir, I have not attended to the argument in this light; but will endeavour to consider it impartially.

A. Allow me to suggest one thought further upon it, before we dismiss it. The Jews were very fond of their customs, and every supposed attempt to change them, excited their resentment. This procured the martyrdom of Stephen; *b* and they persecuted the apostle Paul, for bringing Greeks into the temple. *c* It is evident, that every innovation was intolerable, and they persecuted the author, with persevering zeal and violence: now there was scarce any privilege, of greater account with them, than that of having their children united with them, in their covenant relation with God---scarce any subject

*In this light, there was a most persuasive force in this argument, which at one view, presented all the blessings and privileges of God's people, as a motive to induce their compliance with the gospel.---But it will be hard to digest the propriety of it on the other principle, on which it will stand thus; Repent---for ye are the children of the covenant which God has now disannulled, by which he has excluded your children from all religious privileges, and turned them out with the heathen world.

ject would have more highly disgusted them, or furnished them with such matter for raising popular clamour and indignation against the apostles, as their exclusion from it: *for this would have brought them to a level with the heathen, on whom they looked with great contempt*; yet among their various complaints, brought by them, against the apostles, there is no intimation of any uneasiness about this. If even believing Jews, raised such dissensions about the neglect of circumcision, (Acts 15) when at the same time, they enjoyed baptism and the Lord's supper, as to occasion a general council, of the apostles and elders, to settle the dispute, and restore peace to the churches; may we not suppose, that the exclusion of children, would have produced such dissatisfaction in their minds, and especially in the minds of those *who believed not*; as should have caused, at least, some hint of it; but when there is not so much as *one word said about it*, in the history of those times and transactions, do we not rationally conclude, that there was no complaint on this account; and is not this as much as to say, that no alteration was made; *that children were still united with their parents in God's covenant?*

Now I think, Sir, that the consideration of this subject only, will go far in satisfying an impartial mind, that children were connected with their parents, in apostolic times, as they had been under the law; and I submit to your candid determination, whether the silence of Christ, his apostles and the Jews, with respect to infants, is not a much stronger argument in favour of their baptism, than an objection against it.

Q. But, Sir, as baptism is a seal of faith, is it not improper to administer it to those who do not believe? Persons arrived at years of discretion, are capable of understanding

understanding the doctrines of faith, and exercising it about them, and when they profess repentance towards God, and faith towards Jesus Christ, it is proper to administer baptism to them; but infants are incapable of making a religious profession, and of giving evidences of grace---must it not therefore, be inconsistent with the directions of the gospel, to administer baptism to them, as they are destitute of the required qualifications?

A. If we consider religious institutions as divine appointments, it will not become us to say *who* are proper subjects; *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?* If God has made children the subjects of the seal of his covenant, shall we not rejoice in his will?—That the seal of God's covenant was once affixed to children, will not be disputed by any, and I believe it will be very hard for any to prove, that they are not as well qualified now, as they were then—and we may as well find fault with the Jews, for circumcising their children, as with christians for baptizing theirs. As to the objection, that baptism is a seal of faith, and children have it not, and therefore ought not to be baptized, it is of equal force against circumcision; for circumcision was a seal of faith as much as baptism; *And he, Abraham, believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness: a and he received the sign of circumcision, A SEAL OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH. b* We may as well reason, circumcision was a seal of faith, children did not believe: therefore children ought not to have been circumcised; but is not this reasoning against the expressly revealed will of God?—Probably after all, the seeming difficulty arises from a real mistake. Circumcision and baptism, for I beg leave at present, to consider them

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both,

^a Gen. XV. 6.^b Rom. IV. 11.

both, as seals of the same covenant,* sealed the transactions of the contracting parties. We may obtain the most just conceptions of it, by considering its primitive institution : God said to Abraham, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect ; and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee ; to be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee ; circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.* The terms of the covenant are here clearly stated, if Abraham engages to do this, God promises to bless him, and be his God : circumcision is now appointed the seal of this covenant. As a token of compliance, God requires Abraham to circumcise himself : in doing this, he sealed his faith in God's promise, and his own engagements to be the Lord's—he did the same, when he circumcised his children ; but no respect was had to their faith ; they were passive subjects.

Q. Though this may be plain and scriptural to you, Sir, I do not yet feel satisfied with your observations ; yet I cannot contradict them. I do not see the propriety of affixing baptism, a seal of faith, to those who give no evidence of it. I do not see but that it is as proper to baptize adults, who do not believe, as children, who are destitute of faith.

A. Perhaps I may not be able to satisfy your mind ; but let us attend more particularly to the subject. And to make it as familiar as may be, I will suppose myself transacting in it. I understand it to be the will of God, that those who embrace the gospel, should publickly profess religion, enter into covenant with him, and receive baptism, as a seal of their faith, and engagements. Now I give

UP

*As the argument respects the subject of the seal, not the manner of administering it— if it appears, that infants may be the subjects of it—few will question, whether it ought to be administered by circumcision, or baptism under the gospel.

up myself to God thro' Jesus Christ, and seal my dedication in baptism. By this the covenant, between God and me, is confirmed. God is now my God, and I am his servant. Now I bring my children, and devote them to God in the same manner: by this I practically acknowledge that I have received them, and do now resign them to him again: ---that he has an absolute right to them, and I now devote them to his will: also their obligations to serve him, and need of his mercy---and that I do now commend them to his grace thro' Jesus, to be sanctified and saved by his spirit, engaging to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* God now receives them as an offering which I have made him. He is now my God, and I, and my children are his, given and sealed over to him in baptism: and when they shall give up themselves to him, as I have done, the covenant will subsist between him, and them, as it does between him and me. In all this my qualifications are considered, and my faith is sealed: nothing is respected in the child, which is a meer passive subject: and my faith, and the consecration of myself to God, is renewed and sealed,

* If this be the true import and signification of infant baptism, were it considered in this serious light, it would have a happy tendency to correct some of those abuses which it now suffers.--- few would call it *ceremony* --- The subjects would consider it as an obligation to become christians indeed, rather than as making them *such*--- parents would be so far from considering themselves as having discharged their duty to their children, because they had obtained baptism for them; that they would feel their obligations, to train them up in the way wherein they should go, increased and confirmed: this would powerfully excite them to improve their baptismal consecration for sacred purposes---to restrain their children from impious ways---to teach them the fear of the Lord---and by faith and fervent prayer, to recommend them to the care and blessing of the father of mercies. Should parents faithfully practise these duties, would it not afford a pleasing prospect, that their children would be a generation to serve the Lord, when they should be sleeping in the dust? Let parents then, seriously consider their sacred obligations, and be exhorted to fulfil them, by all the weighty and moving arguments drawn from the answer of a good conscience, their own comfort, the present and future eternal good of their beloved offspring.

sealed, every time I bring a child to baptism, just as they are, when I attend the Lord's supper. So that baptism is a seal of faith, and faith is as truly sealed, when children are brought to it by their believing parents, as when they offer themselves in it. And this shews, why it is proper to baptize children, who may be destitute of faith, when offered by their believing parents, when it is not proper to baptize adult persons, who do not profess it; for in that case, faith, the faith of the parent, is exercised and sealed; but in this, no faith is professed, and therefore, it is improper to apply the seal.

Q. I cannot, Sir, disapprove of these things according to your way of explaining them, though I do not feel satisfied with them.

A. But does not your reason approve them as just, and agreeable to scripture; though indeed, they may be against your feelings.—But pray, Sir, which ought to govern, our reason, or our feelings, that is, our prejudices.

Q. But, Sir, you represent the covenant with Abraham, as being the same with the christian dispensation, and suppose the children of Israel, to have been of the same character with the christian church, and circumcision and baptism, as alike seals of faith—but I have not viewed these subjects in this light.

A. And, pray, Sir, in what light have you viewed them?

Q. Why, Sir, when I have considered the commands which God gave his people by Moses, and observed that he made obedience the term of his blessing; and the address of Moses to the Israelites, *The man that doth these things shall live in them*, they seemed to express a legal spirit, and savour much of the covenant of works, very different from the spirit of the gospel.

A.

A. However these things have appeared to you, when I have compared the subjects and language of the Old Testament with the New—the titles God gave his ancient people, with the character given of the church in the gospel—the blessings promised to each, and the use and end of religious ordinances in both; I could not perceive any difference between them; they appeared to me to be the same.

Q. I should be glad, Sir, you would give me your idea of these subjects.

A. I consider the covenant with Abraham, as comprehending all spiritual blessings. I find no greater good promised in the gospel, than is contained in that promise, *I will be their God*—no more can I conceive of a temper more spiritual, than that in which he entered into it: choosing God for his exceeding great reward, engaging to walk before him with a perfect heart—and looking for pardon and acceptance thro' Jesus Christ. *which we are clearly taught by the word of the apostles. The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen thro' faith preached before the gospel unto Abraham; a* and these words of Christ, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad. b* I am therefore led to consider Abraham, as entering into covenant with God, in the same views, and with the same spirit, that saints do under the gospel; and he received circumcision as a seal of this covenant and his engagements, just as believers receive baptism, as a seal of theirs. Was there any thing of the nature of the covenant of works, or a legal spirit in this?

Q. And do you view the Israelites in the same light as you do the christian church?

A. Yes, as sustaining the same religious character, visibly and professedly, *a people holy to the Lord.* Do

not

^a Exod. XIX. 5, 6.

^b 1 Pet. II. 2.

not the scriptures teach this; when God says to the children of Israel, *Ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people, a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation*... *a* and the apostle quotes this passage, and applies it to the christian church, *Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people* *b* Are we not to consider them as being in the same relation to God, and alike precious in his sight? When the apostle quotes the words of the psalmist, *Psa. 22. 22. as the words of Christ, I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee;* must we not consider them as children of the same father...equally related to Christ? If Christ was not ashamed to call the congregation of Israel, his brethren, why should we disown them? If the apostles, Peter and Paul, agreed to consider them as one church, why should not you and I?

Q. But does not that covenant and dispensation wear a legal appearance? Were they not to be prospered and blessed for obedience, and frowned upon and cursed for disobedience, and was not their conduct the rule by which they were treated? Was not this to justify and reward them for their good works, perfectly agreeable to a legal covenant?

A. Truly, great blessings were promised to obedience, under that dispensation; but this is no evidence that it was legal. Let us consider the nature of it. We have it described, *Deut. 6. Now these are the commandments which the Lord commanded to teach you, that ye might do them; that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might; and it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God.* If

it

a Heb. II. 11.

b Mat. XII. 37.

it was a legal, that is a self-justifying spirit, to obey all the commands of God, from a principle of supreme love to him, no doubt the gospel is full of it. --- If it belongs to the covenant of works, to justify them for this obedience, did not Christ preach it when he said, *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned: and was not our father Abraham, and the harlot Rahab, justified by the covenant of works.* If it be legal to promise and reward in the way of obedience, will not the saints obtain the kingdom of Heaven by these means, since, *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and enter in thro' the gates into the city.* Upon examination it will be found, that Moses used as forcible arguments, to dissuade the Israelites from all confidence in their own righteousness, as are used in all the bible; and as industriously exhorted them to the love and fear of God, and obedience to his commands, as any inspired writer. It will appear, that he inculcated the same religion on them, that the apostles enjoined on their hearers: so that there is a perfect agreement, in sentiment, perfect and religious practice, between the economy of Moses, and the dispensation of Jesus Christ, though expressed in different ways.

Q. I think, Sir, according to your way of explaining these points, there is no difference between law and gospel, Jew and Christian.

A. If you suppose there was any material difference between them, I must beg leave in my turn to propose some difficulties in my mind, which I wish to remove.

Q. I was never sensible of any; but if you think there are, I should be glad you would state them, and I will take them into consideration.

A.

A. On the supposition, Sir, that there is *any thing* of the nature of the covenant of works, that is, that persons were, in any degree, justified and blessed on account of their own personal goodness, under that dispensation, I propose, whether you consider it as justifying them, wholly or in part, on account of their own good works?

Q. Why, Sir, many things in it, seem to be discoveries of grace, and other things of a different nature.

A. You suppose it then, compounded of law and gospel, partaking of the nature of the covenant of works, and of the covenant of grace, but will this consist with the observation of the apostle, *If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise works is no more works?* Do not these words teach us, that grace or works must change their nature, before there can be any connection between them?

Q. They do make them distinct, and shew that they cannot be joined together.

A. Then you give up the opinion that it was made up of works and grace together.

Q. I think I must.

A. If you renounce that opinion, must you not consider it as a legal dispensation, in which they were justified and blessed for their own righteousness, without any exercise of grace; or a dispensation of grace, without any respect to personal goodness.

Q. It seems to be a necessary consequence certainly, that it must be one, distinct and separate from the other.

A. Then I beg leave to know, whether it be consistent with divine righteousness, to bestow favours on sinful men, for their own obedience and goodness.

Q. I think not, the scripture expressly declares that *the soul that sinneth shall die*: so that it seems to me, inconsistent and impossible in nature, that God should bless and reward transgressors, for their supposed goodness, it being directly contrary to the express declaration of his law.

A. Then you must acknowledge that the covenant of works, and personal goodness, is not the method by which God has dealt with men since the fall: and suppose, that all the promises made, and privileges bestowed, have been only through the Redeemer?

Q. This, I believe, has been the common doctrine.

A. If you suppose that it is inconsistent with the righteousness of God, to bestow blessings, and make promises to sinful men, only through a mediator; I ask, can we admit, that he should enter into covenant with them, and become *their God* and they *his people* in any other way?

Q. I think we cannot.

A. Will not a consideration of this subject only, reduce us to an unavoidable necessity of viewing the methods in which God has dealt with his people, as being really the same, before the coming of Christ, as since; the same under the law, as under the gospel?

Q. I confess, at present, I do not see but it will.

A. If there was no material difference in the nature of these dispensations, must not the visible character of the religious societies, and their relation to God, be the same?

Q. It appears that they must, truly.

A. If we consider the nature of these dispensations, and the visible character of those who belonged to them, as being the same, I do not see, why the seals may not be applied to the same subjects; nor can I

see any objection against the baptism of children, which will not operate equally against the circumcision of them : and if it was proper to circumcise, I do not see, why it may not be as proper to baptize them. We are certain, that when God instituted a visible covenant, the seal of it, by his express command, was affixed to their children, and this was to be an ordinance with the seed of Abraham, throughout their generations, and *an everlasting covenant*. We accordingly find, that it continued until the ascension of Christ ; and as we are assured that then, the Gentiles became *partakers of the root, a* with the Jews, *fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise, b* it became an ordinance to them in like manner. If it shall continue throughout their generations, it will be in force, while the church continues on earth ; and if then, the great promise of it, *I will be their God*, will be compleatly fulfilled, in their inheriting the kingdom of Heaven, *in very deed it will last forever*, according to the divine declaration in its first appointment. Here give me leave to observe further, that when God had instituted this *everlasting covenant*, fixed the terms, and given directions for the administration of the seals of it, there was no need that any thing more should ever be said about them : for they were to continue as long as the covenant should last : for this reason we are warranted to believe, that these points remain in the same state, in which they were, at their original institution : *unless they are repealed, or altered by a particular, positive precept.* And I consider this as the true reason why nothing is said about infants, from the days of Moses, to the death of St. John.

2 Much has been said, Sir, about the Jewish dispensation. I wish you to give me your ideas of it : probably

a Rom. XI. 17.

b Eph. III. 2.

probably I may receive instruction and satisfaction from them.

A. Why, Sir, my idea is briefly this, I consider God, in Abraham, as setting up his visible kingdom among men. For a long time, the covenant with him, and the promise of the Messiah, were all the means used for their instruction and edification; but it pleased him, to appoint other means for their spiritual good. These were designed to reveal and explain the nature of the blessings contained in the promise, *In thee shall all nations be blessed.* For this purpose he instituted the passover, sacrifices, feasts and purifications, which obtained under that economy. These were so many typical representations of Christ, and the blessings of his atonement. *The law thus had a shadow of good things to come.* And by these, as means, they were instructed in the nature of Christ's work, and the blessings of his redemption; and their faith and affections were drawn forth to them. Agreeably to this the apostle observes, *The law, meaning more particularly the Mosaic law, was our school master to bring us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.* Under that dispensation, the Jewish church was at school, and the law, as a school-master, was teaching them the first principles of Christ, directing and leading them to him, that they might be justified and saved by him. And if they received this instruction, and attended their religious rites according to their design, they promoted their faith and holiness, as christian ordinances promote the holiness and comfort of true believers.* Hence the apostle says, *They did all eat that same*

* Hab. X. 4 Gal. III. 24. 1 Cor. X. 16.
* Rev. XII. 1. And there appeared a great wonder in Heaven, a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet. This woman is the church. The dispensations of Moses and Christ, are represented by the moon and sun: she had been clothed with the moon, but had now risen

same spiritual meat, and did all drink that same spiritual drink, for they drank of the rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ. This, Sir, is briefly my idea of it.

Q. How do you reconcile this with Heb. viii. 8 -- 10. *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—For this is the covenant that I will make—I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts.* Does not this speak of a new covenant, different from the former--how then can you consider this first covenant as teaching the same things figuratively, that are taught in the gospel?

A. It is evident, that what we term a dispensation, the apostle called a covenant. Heb. 9. *Then verily the first covenant had ordinances of divine service.* The articles, which the apostle enumerates, were the chief things contained in that, which we call, the Mosaic dispensation. Of this the apostle was speaking, as is manifest by his running a parallel between the principal branches of that and the christian dispensation; which serves as the example and shadow of Heavenly things; and by pointing out the time he made it, *In the day that he took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.* Now if we compare the several texts to which the apostle refers, we shall see the consistency of these remarks, with this passage and the true meaning of it: *Exod. xix. 7, 8. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people; and all the people answered together and said, All that the Lord hath spoken*

we will do. Above it into the sun--the law borrowed all its light from the gospel, as the moon does from the sun. The light of the moon and sun is the same light: so is the light of the law and gospel; and agreeable to this figure, the law and gospel lightened the same church, as the sun and moon enlighten the same world.

we will do. Moses repeating this, Deut. v. 27, 29. mentions God's observation, upon it. *The Lord heard the voice of your words; and said unto me, they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them!* implying, that it was a good profession; but an heart to practise upon it, was wanting; accordingly the psalmist observes, Psa. lxxviii. 37. *Their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.* After long experience had demonstrated their hypocrisy, God made a promise, Jer. xxxi. 31. which the apostle quotes in this place. *For finding fault with them, That they did flatter him with their mouths, and lie unto him with their tongues. Behold the days come that I will make a new covenant,* which the inference of the apostle teaches us was the gospel dispensation. *In that he saith a new, he hath made the first or Mosaic old, which vanishes away,* and the gospel came in its place, and in this he would put his law in their mind, and they should not only make fair promises, but have hearts to perform them. By which it is manifest, that by this new covenant, we are to understand the gospel dispensation, and those influences of the blessed spirit, which, under this, God would grant to his people--but all this is perfectly consistent with the observations I made before.

Q. But, Sir, are not the Jews represented as being in a state of bondage--actuated by a servile spirit, and under a grievous yoke, which they were unable to bear? How is this reconcileable with your opinion of that dispensation?

A. Why, Sir, their dispensation was introduced with terrible appearances of divine majesty, making them stand *afar off*--their religious ordinances were expensive, as well as laborious, making an attendance on them very burdensome: But the gospel was introduced

introduced with songs of praise; and by repealing those painful rites and expensive services, and supplying their place with those which were more mild and gentle; and wearing a more benign aspect, invites us to *draw near*; but this no more changes the nature of them, than a winter and summer dress changes the character of the person who wears them.

Q. I think, Sir, you have an easy way to yourself, of removing difficulties and answering objections against your principles.

A. If we lay aside prejudices, and seek instruction from the scriptures, they will doubtless furnish us with means to remove all objections, that are made against those doctrines which are plainly scriptural. But that this is supported by scripture, is demonstrable from the words of the apostle, Gal. iii. 23. 5. & iv. 1. 8. *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up to the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But as soon as faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master. Now I say, that the heir, as long as he liveth, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all: . . . Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage, under the elements of the worlds. But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.* Evidently in this passage, the apostle is describing the state of the visible people of God, before and after the coming of Christ: and the end and use of that law or dispensation, under which they had lived. To that he assigns the office and employment of a school-master; to them the condition and place of scholars, going to it for instruction, that by it they might be educated

educated and trained up for the privileges and blessings of that gospel, that inheritance to which they were heirs. Under this instruction, they were to continue till faith in Christ came; but with his coming they were to finish their education, and enter upon their sacred callings. This the apostle illustrates by a common maxim and similitude, That the heir, while he is a child, is treated as a servant, instructed and disciplined by tutors and governors, till the time appointed of the father: and applies it to himself and his believing brethren, or the church of God;—even so we, when we were children, were under bondage to beggarly elements;—but when the fulness of time was come, when they had arrived to manhood, they were no more servants but sons. So that according to the doctrine and similitude of the apostle, the church before the coming of Christ and after it, was as much the same church, as the child grown to manhood, is the same person.

Q. What change then did the church experience, at the introduction of the gospel dispensation?

A. Why, Sir, to apply the similitude of the apostle, to our own times and customs: the heir, having been well instructed and educated in his childhood, and now having become of age, had a freedom suit given him, and was put in possession of the estate, with all the privileges and blessings of it.

Q. But does not the apostle call the Jews the children of Hagar, and christians the children of the promise; and does not this make as great a difference between them, as there was between Ishmael and Isaac?

A. I am glad you proposed this question; as it will give an opportunity for a further explanation of these subjects. The apostle improves the family of Abraham to represent the family of God. The promise

promise of a posterity to Abraham contained a twofold seed. One was natural, which the apostle describes, by calling it *after the flesh*: The other was a spiritual, holy seed, termed the *children of the promise*, which walked in the steps of his faith. So the inheritance promised, was of the twofold nature, temporal blessings, an earthly, typical, and involving in it an Heavenly Canaan. They who were only children after the flesh, were heirs of the earthly, while they who were children of the flesh and spirit, as Isaac, were heirs both of the earthly and Heavenly Canaan. These two kinds of seed were represented by the two sons of Abraham; as the two covenants, ---that made with Abraham, and that made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai, of which we have so large an account, Exodus, Leviticus, &c. were represented by *Sarah* and *Hagar*. Ishmael represented all the natural seed. Isaac was both a natural and a spiritual son---Hagar was an hand-maid to Sarah, and useful in her place; so the Sinai covenant was subservient to the covenant with Abraham, and useful to the family of God. So also the two sons of Abraham, denoted the different characters of his posterity;---Ishmael, all those who were satisfied with the form of godliness and earthly enjoyments; Isaac, those whose affections were spiritual, who looked thro' outward ceremonies to Christ the substance: whose hearts rose sublimely above all the delights of an earthly, and fixed on the milk and honey of an heavenly Canaan. Ishmael and Isaac lived for a time in the same family of Abraham; thus the natural and spiritual seed, lived indiscriminately in the visible church of God.—When Isaac was weaned, Hagar and Ishmael derided Sarah and her son: for which they were cast out of the family of Abraham, and only Sarah and Isaac remained. So when
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the believing, holy seed were weaned from the breast of carnal ordinances, the Ishmaels of the day, those unbelieving Jews who were nursed and educated by Hagar, the covenant at Sinai, whose faith, hope and expectations arose from an external conformity to their religious institutions, mocked and persecuted the spiritual Sarah and her Isaac—for which the command was given, *Cast out the bond woman and her son*; and the Mosaic, typical dispensation, and all those unbelieving Jews who trusted in a conformity to it, were excommunicated the church of God, and only the true seed remained. Then it appeared that *he was not a Jew who was one outwardly, nor was that circumcision which is in the flesh; but in the heart and spirit.*^a Now also the mystery which in other ages had not been known to the sons of men, began to be revealed, *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel.*^b And now also it began to be understood that the seed promised to Abraham, especially, was Christ, and those who believed in him, from among all nations; and they who were Christ's were *Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*^c Accordingly the apostle congratulated his Gentile brethren, with taking rank and place with Isaac in the family of Abraham: *Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promises.* And now they saw in Abraham all the families of the earth blessed. This also may explain Rom. 9. *They are not all Israel that are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children, i. e. All they who are the natural posterity of Israel, are not in spirit and temper the children of Abraham, according to the special meaning of the promise; some were Ishmaels, and some were Isaacs. The Isaacs, God owned and retained in his family; but the Ishmaels he cast away.*

^a Rom. II. 28, 29.

^b Ephes. III. 6.

^c Gal. III. 16, 29.

2. But are we to consider the children of Israel, as the visible church of God, when they gave up themselves to idolatry, as they did in Egypt, and the days of their judges and kings?

A. Do not the declarations made on such occasions, *That God remembered his covenant*, shew that he considered them as particularly related to himself, and that in faithfulness to his promise he appeared for their relief?—They often corrupted themselves and were chastised for their abominations; but if we suppose, this destroyed their visibly holy character, what shall we say of the professed churches of Christ?—Does not Christ himself charge some of them with as great corruptions, especially considering their superior advantages, as were chargeable on the Israelites—read Rev. II & III. chap. If such errors in doctrine and corruptions in practice, were chargeable on churches, which Christ owned and blessed with his presence, why may we not suppose that he owned the Jewish church, when that was corrupted in like manner. If the degeneracies of the seed of Abraham, destroyed their visibly religious character, why did not the corruptions of the primitive churches, so destroy their religious character, that Christ had no visible church on earth, *the gates of hell* having effectually prevailed against it. The errors in doctrine and corruptions in practice, prevailing in churches, acknowledged to have enjoyed the presence of Christ, may teach us modesty and caution in asserting, what defects in constitution and errors in practice, shall so corrupt churches, as to render them unworthy of the christian name: I think it rather becomes us to make that practical improvement, which the apostle has recommended to our observation, *Let us not be idolaters as were some of them—neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted:*

tempted : wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

Q You have hitherto, Sir, been endeavouring to remove my doubts about infant baptism ; but have not, professedly, advanced any arguments in favour of it.

A. What need is there of doing this ? If objections against it are removed by the word of God, it needs no arguments to support it—it supports itself. If you treat it candidly, when you find it reconcileable with scripture and divine institutions, you will agree to it with a satisfied mind ; but if you do not, it must be thro' some prejudice you have against it.

Q True, Sir ; but will it not tend to establish a doubting mind, not only to have objections answered, but to see the doctrine proved to be scriptural, by conclusive arguments ?

A. It will. And in hope of this, in addition to the remarks already made to defend the practice of infant baptism, I will suggest a few observations, which satisfy my mind, that it is the will of Jesus Christ, that it should be practised in his church, under the gospel dispensation. The first passage I mention, is in 1 Cor. vii. 14. *The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife by the believing husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they HOLY.* It will be of some use to consider in what sense the scripture uses the terms—*unclean* and *holy*. It is evident they are used in a twofold sense : in the highest sense, to denote the pollution of sin, and real satisfaction. In the other sense, an unsuitness for sacred uses. To illustrate this by one passage only, Hag. 2. *If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and touch bread, or any meat, shall it be holy ? And the priest said, No. . . . If one that is unclean by a dead body, touch any of these, shall it be unclean ? And the*

the priest said, it shall be unclean. So those things which were devoted to religious uses by divine appointment, as the first fruits, &c. were called holy. In this sense the apostle uses it in this passage. The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and their children are *holy* as every creature of God... is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. In this sense the apostle declares children to be *holy*; and this takes off all exceptions against the children of believing parents, as disqualified and unfit for the holy ordinance of baptism. The only explanation which has been, or I think, can be given of this text is, That *holy* in this place means *legitimate*. Agreeably to this, the passage runs thus, The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife... else were your children bastards; but now are they lawfully begotten. But this not only makes the scripture, in this place, use words in a sense in which it does in no other passage; but it makes faith necessary to a lawful matrimonial commerce, and so teaches that all who are destitute of it, the husband and wife being unbelievers, live in *real fornication*; but this is repugnant to common sense. If the foregoing sense be established, this text represents children as fit to be offered to God in his ordinance, as lambs were in his sacrifices.

Q. And, Sir, what other passages do you consider arguments to it?

A. To me the observations of the apostle, Rom. xi. 16, 25, are a conclusive argument in favour of infant baptism: *If the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches; and if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not thyself against the root; but if thou boast, thou bearest*

bearest not the root; but the root beareth thee. The following observations are clearly contained in this passage. The olive tree, root and branches, represent Abraham and his seed in their covenant relation to God—being as it were a religious, holy tree, of which Abraham was the root, and his posterity the branches. The fatness, which is the sap and nourishment of the tree, denotes their religious privileges and ordinances. The breaking off of some of the branches, refers to the rejection of those unbelieving Jews, who rejected the counsel of God against themselves. The grafting in of the branches of the wild olive tree, refers to the uniting of believing Gentiles with the Jews, in their religious church state, and their joint participation of the privileges and ordinances granted to Abraham and his seed. Now observe, the apostle says, *Some of the branches were broken off*, which is equal to an express assertion, that others were not; but still retained their place. Observe also, that where some unbelieving Jews were broken off, other believing Gentiles were grafted in, and so the tree remained compleat in all its parts and branches. Observe further, that the Jews who were not broken off, and the Gentiles who were grafted in, were nourished by the fatness of the *same old olive tree*. The idea which the apostle here suggests, is illustrated by fact and example. The posterity of Abraham who were Israelites in deed, were looking for redemption in Jerusalem, like old Simeon they were waiting for the consolation of Israel. *a* He made his appearance they knew, and exulted in him—*We have found him*. They acknowledge him as the Messiah, *Rabbi, thou art the son of God.* *b* They obey and follow him. While they adore and rejoice in the Emmanuel, the spurious offspring of Abraham,

a Luke II.*b* John I.

ham; the children after the flesh, despise and reject him: in the mean time devout Greeks and proselytes were enquiring for him. *--- Sir, we would see Jesus a* While many of his own were ripening, by derision and contempt, for a total rejection, others were preparing to fill up their place. While those by his crucifixion and the persecution of his followers, were procuring to themselves a final excommunication from among his people, these were preparing for a place in his visible church. When those were cast out, some of the branches were broken off, and the branches of the wild olive-tree were grafted in with those which were not, and with them partook of the root and fatness of the olive tree. But how did this affect those who maintained their place? Truly, not materially at all: they were the same persons before and after, in temper and relation to God. They only exchanged teachers, Moses for Christ---the dim light of the moon and stars, for the clear brightness of the sun of righteousness, and passed from a state of distance and severity in the duties of religion, to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Hence it is evident,

1. That the covenant with Abraham was never disannulled: that his seed were never wholly cast out of it; but retain their place and privileges under the gospel: and therefore, that the commands and regulations of it are still in force.

2. That believing Gentiles are united with believing Jews in their visible church state, and become fellow-heirs of the privileges granted to Abraham and his seed; and by this union with them and interest in their privileges, become subject to regulations and commands enjoined on them: Hence I infer, that believing Jews and Gentiles, are under the

same

same obligations to circumcise or baptize their children, that Isaac and Jacob were.

Q. I think, Sir, you proposed to examine, whether there be not as much in favour of infant baptism, in the history of the apostles, as there is against it. *a*

A. I did, Sir, and if you please we will now attend to that enquiry. In the Acts of the apostles we have an account of the conversion of many to the christian faith, and their baptism. Let us examine those instances---the *three thousand*---of the *Samaritans* and *Eunuch* by *Philip*---the apostle *Paul* by *Ananias*---those who were converted by the preaching of *Peter*, at the house of *Cornelius*---and those baptized at *Ephesus*---As it does not appear but that these were adult persons, who professed faith and repentance, they no way determine any thing, respecting infants---yet I think these are all the instances of baptism recorded in the *Acts*, except those of *households*, which apply to the present subject. The apostle says, *I baptized the household of Stephanus*. *b* You will say, it does not appear, that there were any infants in this family---true: neither does it appear that there were none; but if families generally contain children or servants, and the scriptures consider them in this light; according to scripture and common observation, it is more probable that there were some, than that there were no children in it.

Q. But if there were, it does not appear but that they were baptized as believers.

A. Neither does it appear that they were; but if it is more common that all who belong to an house or family, do not believe, than that they do, it is more probable that they baptized some in families who did not believe, than that they baptized none. So that the baptism of households, involves in it the practice

practice of infant baptism. But let us consider another instance. We are informed Acts xvi, 33. *That the jailor and all his were baptized.* This expressly points out household baptism.

Q. But, Sir, *he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.* And if we allow that all his family were baptized, we must also allow that they were all believers.

A. I suppose, Sir, it is common for those who maintain *christian baptism* to alledge, that this passage as fully proves that all believed, as that all were baptized; but whoever looks at the original text, will see that there is no intimation that any believed beside himself. It will probably be acknowledged that, *having believed in God, he rejoiced with all his house,* is a literal translation of the Greek (*he galliasa to panoiki pepistukoos 100 Theoo*) and so that believing in God, refers to *him*, as he took them... and he set meat before them, does... and his house, refers to his rejoicing... and what could be more natural, than that his house, which was filled with terror at seeing him draw out his sword to kill himself, and heard him in such distress and anxiety, enquire what he should do to be saved, should rejoice at seeing him, so soon, in such a state of safety and comfort... So that this may properly be considered not only as an instance of household baptism; but also as an example of the baptism of a family for the faith of the head of it, which may be illustrated by another instance.

Q. And what is that, Sir?

A. We have an account in the 14, 15th verses of this chapter, of the conversation of Lydia, *whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the words which were spoken of Paul.* It follows, *And when she was baptized and her household, she besought us, &c.*
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The history of Lydia represents her as a person of wealth and figure, and at the head of a family answerable to such a character. While special notice is taken of her conversion, no intimation is given that any of her family believed. The account of her conversion, being distinct from that of her baptism and the baptism of her family, seems to indicate that they did not believe; yet the whole was baptized. Thus we have an account of the baptism of the families, in connection with their heads. And if all the persons and children belonging to them, were brought to the faith of Christ, so as to give evidence of a gracious state, and be baptized at the same time; I think, I may safely pronounce, that there have not been three other such families since the fall. So that, we may believe that in households the apostles baptized infants, not without good reason.*

* The history of the first ages of the church, leaves no room to doubt the practice of infant baptism in those days. In the year 253, which is reckoned 150 years from the time of the apostles, a council of 64 bishops, met at Carthage. This council, speaking of the baptism of infants, recommended that it be not long deferred. They thus concluded:—Wherefore from baptism and the grace of God, none ought to be prohibited,—especially infants and those newly born, who need our help and the divine mercy. When we consider how gradually sects arise, we cannot readily suppose, that at this time a new sect had arisen in favour of infant baptism. It indeed appears to have been the known and universal practice of the church, since this council, composed of men of piety from all the church, passed this recommendation without opposition or hesitation.

CONFERENCE II.

Quarist. SINCE I saw you last, Mr. Apologist, I have been revolving the various subjects of our conversation in mind, and upon reflection find, that nothing was said about the mode of baptism: I have come to confer with you upon that subject: for tho' from your observations I cannot but entertain favourable thoughts of infant baptism, yet I ever thought immersion or plunging was the right way of administering the ordinance: but as many think differently, I should be glad to have your opinion upon it.

A. On any subject you please, Sir,—But what reasons

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lead you to think that immersion is the only scriptural mode of administering baptism?

Q. The direction of scripture:—The gospel enjoins upon us conformity to the example of Christ. As Christ was baptized by immersion, and the scripture enjoins on us conformity to his example, it requires us to be baptized in the same manner.

A. But is there any direction or command in the account of Christ's baptism, which obliges us to conform to the manner of it? If not, we may rank it among the accidental circumstances of his life, and conform to it or not, as is most convenient for us.

Q. But Christ has left us an example that *we should follow his steps*, (1 Pet. ii. 21, 22, 23.) and this obliges us to conform to the manner of his baptism, as well as other parts of his conduct.

A. We are to imitate the example of Christ: but in what? In eating and drinking? Or are we to be like him *who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not*: that is, in innocence and simplicity, in meekness, patience and forgiveness under injuries and abuses. But if this obliges us to conform to the manner of his attending sacred ordinances, by the same rule, it obliges us to conform to the manner of his attending all religious duties; and you being a regular conformist to the example of Christ, must take as great pains to *go up into a mountain to pray*, (Luke xiv. 23.) as you do to go into the water to be baptized.*

Q. But was not plunging the mode in which John baptized all those who came to him?

A. What reason have you for such a supposition?

Q. The account which the evangelist gives of his baptism. It is said, Mat. iii. 6. that those who came to him were baptized of him in Jordan—which supposes that he stood in the river to baptize; but what need was there of this, ex-

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* It is said, Mat. III. 16. *Jesus when he was baptized, came up straightway out of the water.*—This is considered as an indisputable evidence that Christ was plunged, and that immersion is the scriptural mode of administering baptism.—On this it need only be said, that the reading, according to the words of the evangelists, in the language in which they wrote (the Greek) may as well be that *Jesus went to the water and came from it*: which destroys every appearance of an argument for plunging rather than sprinkling. This may also be observed relative to all the baptisms of John, and the baptism of the eunuch by Philip. That nothing more can certainly be inferred from them, than the use of water.—This, it is presumed, will not be disputed by those who are acquainted with the original.—To illustrate it by examples from the Greek, would not be edifying to common readers.

cept to plunge those who came to be baptized? This proves that baptism ought to be by immersion.

A. John said concerning Christ, *he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost*. Now the same word (en, in) is used in both places, and therefore this proves that Christ baptized *IN the Holy Ghost and IN fire*.—If you say it is plain that John meant that Christ should baptize *with* the Holy Ghost, I say, it is as plain that the evangelist meant that John baptized *with* Jordan, i. e. the water of it, and so this text as much proves baptism by sprinkling as by plunging. But if it should be granted that John did plunge those who came to him, this would not be a conclusive argument for baptism by immersion.

Q. Why not?

A. Because the baptism of John was a distinct baptism from the baptism of Christ. It was evidently the design of John's ministry to prepare the way for Christ and the gospel dispensation:—to this end he came preaching the baptism of repentance, which he enforced by the consideration that *the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand*. To this Christ himself, being made under the law, submitted as a divine institution, that he might fulfil all righteousness. They who were awakened by his preaching, and received his baptism, by this professed their faith in the speedy appearance of the Messiah, and promised to acknowledge and obey him when he should be revealed. This we are plainly taught by the apostle, *Acts xix. 4. John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, That they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, Jesus Christ*. In all those therefore who submitted to this baptism, who received Christ when he came, the end of John's ministry and baptism was fulfilled: For when the Kingdom of Heaven came, or the gospel dispensation was set up by Christ, this dispensation expired and came to an end. When therefore, Christ set up his kingdom, and appointed baptism to be the initiating seal of it; it was meet that all those who acknowledged him to be the true Messiah, should receive *his* baptism as a seal of their faith in him, and of their subjection to his government and obedience to his precepts. As the baptism of John was distinct from the baptism of Christ, no certain inference can be drawn from it, with respect to *christian* baptism. But since you have mentioned the example of Christ, give me leave now to propose it as expressly set forth, *by him*, for our imitation.

Q. Do, Sir, for it is my desire to know and do his will.

A. *Supper being ended—he poureth water into a bason, and began*

began to wash his disciples feet—he cometh to Simon Peter—Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed, needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.—There is good reason to believe that this was more than a common washing of the feet for the comfort of the body;—that it partook of the nature of the christian baptism; for that is all the external baptism which the apostles ever had.———*If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me,* teaches us that it was a sign of spiritual cleansing, and of an interest in his blessings—When Peter understood this, he cried, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.—Was he not for being dipped?—But Christ replied, *He that is washed, needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.*—He poured water into a bason, and with that washed their feet, and declared that they were cleansed wholly. Thus by his example and words teaching us, that water sacramentally applied to any part of the body, as clearly points to its spiritual cleansing, as though the whole were immersed or buried in water. Hence we may infer, that all the parade about going *into the water*, according to the example of Christ, is an empty, poor business indeed.

Q. But, Sir, plunging is proved by other texts to be the true scripture baptism.

A. Please to point them out.

Q. Is not the baptism of the eunuch by Philip, a demonstrative proof that plunging is the right manner of baptizing? Read Acts viii. 38, 39 *And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch.—And when they were come up out of the water.* It is here said, *They went down into the water, and came up out of it;* certainly this text proves that plunging is the right mode of baptism, if any will.

A. Let us search for truth, and see whether this is a full proof, that immersion is the *only* scriptural baptism? The force of the argument lies in the meaning of these expressions—*went down, into the water—came up, out of the water*—but can we determine whether *went down*, refers to their descent from the chariot to the ground, or to the water? I think there is as much evidence of the former, as of the latter.—The eunuch desired Philip, ver. 31. to *come up* and sit with him in the chariot—when they came to water, they both descended or went down from the chariot. And as they went down to the water, so after baptism, they came from it.*

But,

* Some of the fathers who had been at this place, represent it only as a brook, very unfit to plunge a person in: this agrees with the account of scripture,

But, Sir, to complete your argument, let me add a thought which you have omitted. They went down BOTH into the water, BOTH Philip and the eunuch; which shews that Philip plunged himself as much as he did the eunuch, and so proves baptism by immersion to perfection.—I am waiting for other texts more decisive in favour of baptism by immersion.

Q. I do not recollect any other which point out baptism by immersion, expressly.

A. Must it not, Sir, indicate a degree of prejudice in favour of a particular principle, to maintain it positively, from a few texts of doubtful signification? It is very wrong to be more positive in our opinions of modes and principles, than those texts which support them are clear and decisive.—But you say, you do not recollect any other text which expressly proves baptism by immersion; others then, I suppose, favour it by way of consequence?

Q. Yes, Sir, there are other texts which, by just and necessary consequence, prove plunging to be the scriptural mode of baptism.

A. What are they?

Q. In this light I consider John iii. 23. *John also was baptizing at Enon near to Salem, for there was much water there.* It is given as the reason, why John baptized in this place, because there was much water in it; but what need of much water, if he only sprinkled. His preferring this place, because of the quantity of water, shews he had need of much.

A. It does not appear, whether John chose this place to accommodate himself, or the multitude who flocked to his baptism, and who might have had need of much as well as he—and this is countenanced by the terms (*polla hudata*) many waters, pools, springs or streams of water, and therefore very convenient for such a concourse.—But sprinkling is as much a consequence from this text, as dipping.—Please to name another passage.

Q. Another text which proves it is, Co'os. ii. 11. 12. *In whom also ye are circumcised—in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh—buried with him in baptism.*—Does not this compare baptism with the burial of Christ, and was not all Christ's body put into the sepulchre—and how can baptism compare with it, unless the body is all put under the water? Whence baptism by plunging is fairly proved.

A. But, Sir, does this respect outward or inward baptism? The subject more naturally refers to inward, and the words following
 scripture, ver. 16. *Arise, go—unto the way which leadeth from Jerusalem to Gaza which is DESART, a dry desolate place.*

following demonstrate it—*Wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God*—If their rising with him, was to faith and holiness, their dying and being buried with him, was to unbelief and sin—The words of the apostle plainly express the sense of the text, Philip. iii. 10. *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings ; being made conformable to his death.*—If baptism reflects a spiritual conformity to the death and resurrection of Christ, this text proves sprinkling, as much as dipping ; for that is as much an external conformity to them as this.

Q. Does not the apostle speak in the same manner, Rom. vi. 3, 4. *Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death ? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.*

A. Almost the same words, Sir, and the same subject : and the words following plainly shew the meaning, *That as Christ was raised from the dead, even so we should walk in newness of life* : making the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, a similitude to represent dying to sin and living to God, in true conversion, self denial and holy practice. But if being buried with Christ, by baptism, proves that those who are baptized must be plunged, I think it equally proves, that they must be plunged till they are drowned ; for the baptism here spoken of respects death—and if it proves that they must be buried in water, as Christ was in the sepulchre, it as fully proves, that they must be buried into death, or till they are dead.

Q. Your observations I cannot contradict : yet I wish to know whether you reject baptism by plunging, as contrary to scripture.

A. I do not : but my opinion, Sir, is, that those texts which are produced to support baptism by immersion, when examined in the Greek, in which the gospel was first written, are so doubtful in their meaning, that we cannot certainly determine whether the apostles baptized by plunging or sprinkling : therefore I assert, that no text of scripture brought to prove it by immersion only, so teaches it, that it ought to be maintained as the *only* scriptural mode.

Q. Yet I think, Sir, you prefer sprinkling ?

A. I do, Sir.

Q. I should be glad to know your reasons ?

A. Why, Sir, I think if it had been the design of Christ, that baptism should be administered in his church, only by immersion, it would have been so revealed in his word, that it might be demonstrably proved, by assertion or consequence

quence to be the only mode ; but as this cannot be clearly proved, I infer, that it is not the revealed will of Christ, that the ordinance should be administered *only* in this way, in his church—There are also other considerations.

Q And what are they ?

A. I think, Sir, before we embrace any principle, we ought, without prejudice, to consider whatever may be said in favour of it, and against it, and be governed by the strongest evidence. Agreeably to this, we ought to examine all the instances of baptism recorded in the New-Testament. Hitherto we have considered those only which seem to favour baptism by plunging.—Let us now attend to those which appear to support it by sprinkling.—In this light we may consider the baptism of the three thousand in one day, by the apostles. We cannot reasonably suppose it was by plunging, as it was probably in the afternoon before they began : and especially as this was in an *house* or the *temple*. Acts ii. The apostle Paul was evidently baptized in the *house* of Judas.—Cornelius and those who were converted by the preaching of Peter, must be supposed to have been baptized in his *house*.—The jailor and his household were baptized in the night and in *prison*.—There is no reason to suppose that there was a sufficient quantity of water in these houses, for the purpose of dipping, therefore we seem to be under a necessity of concluding that they were sprinkled.

Q But did not the Jews keep large quantities of water in their houses, in which they purified themselves from supposed uncleanness ?

A. What use had Cornelius, a *Gentile*, for such things ?

Q But does not the account of the jailor's baptism, afford reason to think, that he was plunged ? Is it not said that he brought them out of prison and was baptized, before he brought them to his house ?—For what purpose was this, but to go to a convenient place for baptism by dipping ?

A. He brought them out, and ver. 24 will tell you from what place—from the inner, into the outer prison.—*Having received such a charge, he thrust them into the inner prison, from thence he brought them into the outer, where they preached the word, he believed and was baptized ; after which he brought them into his house, and set meat before them.*—Now when I consider all the instances of baptism, recorded in the New-Testament, and compare them together, I find as many which support baptism by sprinkling, as are produced to prove it by plunging. But there are other reasons which have confirmed me in my present opinion.

Q And what are they ?

A. The end and design of the ordinance. As baptism is

a seal of the covenant between God and his people, the mode of administering it does not affect the nature of it. It seals the engagements of the parties, either by plunging or sprinkling. But there are other things signified by it. It appears to me, that those pure and blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, which sanctify and refresh the souls of men, are represented by this ordinance. The words of the apostle respect both the ordinance and those influences which it represents, *He saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed (poured) on us abundantly thro' Jesus Christ.* These divine influences were promised under the name and similitude of rain: *He shall come like the rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed. Then will I SPRINKLE clean water on you, and you shall be clean.* As these divine influences are represented by baptism, I think that manner of administering the ordinance, which best agrees with the representation of scripture, is to be preferred.—As that represents them by rain, pouring and sprinkling water, I think administering baptism by sprinkling, more agreeable to scripture description, than plunging; for which reason I prefer that mode of attending the ordinance.

Q. Are these, Sir, the only things signified by it?

A. I think, Sir, it is an outward sign of pardon and cleansing, by the blood of Christ. *Why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.* This was anciently represented by the ceremonial purifications of the law—see Heb. 9. *Moses took the blood of the calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people. He sprinkled likewise the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.* In allusion to this, the blood of Christ is called, the blood of SPRINKLING—hence the reasoning of the apostle, *If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, SPRINKLING the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the sprinkling of the blood of Christ—purge your consciences from dead works.* Now as this inward purification is effected by applying the blood of Christ, which is called the SPRINKLING of the blood of Jesus; I think baptism administered by sprinkling best agrees with the things signified by it, therefore I prefer it.

These, Sir, are the reasons which fix my opinion. I submit them to serious consideration, not doubting, but that if you find baptism administered by sprinkling, more agreeable to the language and example of scripture, and the blessings signified by it, than by plunging, you will unite with me in it, with a satisfied mind.

